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INSIDE TODAY

U.S. NEWS

SERVICES CUT



Robert Buchanan checks under a bus at a Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District transportation center Friday, Aug. 7, 2009 in Houston. In a cost-saving measure, the school district will stop busing students who live within two miles of their school this year.

See International News on
Page B3

SPORTS NEWS

SUDDEN DEATH



Ryan Moore reacts on the 18th green after winning the Wyndham Championship PGA golf tournament in a playoff at Sedgefield Country Club in Greensboro, N.C., Sunday, Aug. 23, 2009.

See Sports Today on Page B10

Taking the crown for 2 years straight

Venezuelan teen, the most beautiful in the Universe

NASSAU, Bahamas – Miss Venezuela was the fairest of them all once again, winning the 2009 Miss Universe crown for the second year straight and the sixth time since the pageant's creation.

Dressed in a flowing red gown, 18-year-old Stefania Fernandez hugged the runner-up from the Dominican Republic and danced in joy as her victory was announced Sunday.

The crown briefly fell to the floor as it passed from one Venezuelan beauty to the next.

But Fernandez said there was time for outgoing Miss Universe Dayana Mendoza to whisper in her ear that she must have worked hard for Venezuela to win consecutive crowns.

"What do we Venezuelans have?" Fernandez, an international relations student, told reporters after the pageant. "That we are ourselves."

The other top-five finalists were runner-up Ada Aimee de la Cruz, followed by Miss Kosovo, Droga Ganusha; Miss Australia, Rachael Finch; and Miss Puerto Rico, Mayra Matos Perez.

During a question-and-answer segment with the five



top finalists, Fernandez said she believed women have overcome obstacles such as hitting the proverbial glass ceiling.

"I feel we have reached the level that men are at," she said.

When asked later how she thought beauty contests promoted equality between men and women, Fernandez said they provided exposure.

"We have quite a following worldwide," she said. "We are models to follow."

The new Miss Universe is from the city of Merida in the west of a beauty-obsessed South American country where hard-fought pageants are something of a national sport, with contestants widely dissected by the public and the media.

Fernandez said she did not know whether Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez would receive her. He did not meet with Mendoza when she won and made no public statements at the time.

But Fernandez said he might change his mind.

"We'll see, because we are

making history," she said.

The top 15 Miss Universe finalists appeared in bathing suits before the final 10 were chosen for the evening gown segment.

Pageant co-owner Donald Trump told reporters, "I think this is the most beautiful group of women I've ever seen."

The televised event included musical performances by Flo Rida, Heidi Montag, David Guetta and Kelly Rowland. Montag gave her first live performance, singing "Body Language" from her debut album.

Fans cheered on the blond star of MTV's "The Hills," although NBC, which broadcast the event in the Bahamas live, blocked out more than half of her performance as they

introduced the 15 finalists.

"It's my first performance live and it's in front of a billion eyes," Montag said.

The on-stage hosts were Billy Bush, co-anchor of "Access Hollywood," and Claudia Jordan, a former Miss Rhode Island USA who has appeared on several TV shows. Judges included actor Dean Cain and supermodel Valeria Mazza.

Miss China, Wang Jingyao, was named Miss Congeniality and Miss Thailand, Chutima Durongdej, won Miss Photogenic.

Many contestants have suffered from dehydration in recent weeks, and Jewel Selver, Miss Turks and Caicos, went home Saturday to recuperate, said Esther Swan, Miss Universe spokeswoman. □



Miss Universe Aruba Diane Croes participated in the Miss Universe pageant last week in the Bahamas where our neighboring country Venezuela won the Miss Universe title for the 6th time.

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Aruba International Pro Am Golf Tournament enjoyed a weekend of activities



WEST POINT — The 15th annual Aruba International Pro Am Golf Tournament took off on Friday with registration at the club house, the opportunity to play a few practice rounds, and a welcome reception. Tierra del Sol's head Golf Pro Oliver Riding, Golf Pro Adam Williamson and the support staff of the club house,

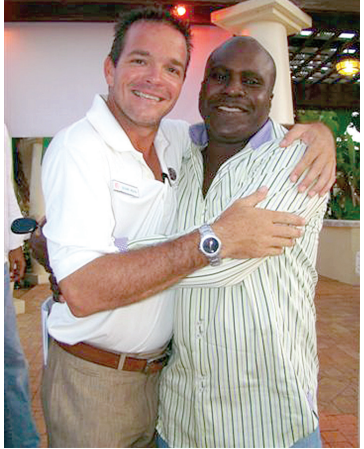
including the Body & Soul Spa therapists, welcomed golfers from 10 different countries with a goody-bag, and a souvenir logo polo-shirt and cap. The Aruba Trading Company, one of the tournament's main sponsors offered an open bar, including freshly made Mojitos and decorated the Tierra del Sol club house garden with

Johnnie Walker banners, the tournament's preferred brand of Scotch whiskey. During the two days of plays, pros always played their own ball, while the amateurs played a 4-man scramble format. Keeping accurate score, the pros and the amateurs played 36 holes, and enjoyed brunch on both days, a Caribbean



barbeque on Saturday and an award dinner with prizes on Sunday. Pictured here some of the 15th

annual Aruba International Pro Am Golf Tournament's unforgettable moments. □








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Balashi Chicken Special at Cactus Jack's is irresistible

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PALM BEACH - A secret recipe is now available for everyone: Cactus Jack's Balashi Chicken, a half chicken in Balashi beer batter, has been wrapped into a special incentive, celebrating the restaurant's first year in business. The chicken comes with French

fries and coleslaw and an ice cold Balashi beer is served with it. So when you are in the mood for an early dinner after a long day on the beach: go to Cactus Jack's at The Village in front of the Radisson Resort and indulge! The Balashi chicken is rotisserie

chicken marinated in a special house blend, then slow roasted with Balashi beer until tender and juicy. These pictures are of the marketing coordinator Jimmy Douglas and Chef Cook Marcel over de Vest from Cactus Jack. □



Loyal visitors honored at the Aruba Beach Club Resort

ORANJESTAD - Recently at the Aruba Beach Club Resort vacationers were presented with honorary titles created by the Ministry of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guest visiting Aruba for ten and 20 consecutive years. Special friends of Aruba, enjoying ten or more annual vacations here, are given the Distinguished Guest certificate and those with twenty consecutive years are awarded the Ambassador of goodwill. The recent honoring were effected by the Aruba Tourism Authority associate Ricardo Croes at the Aruba Beach Resort they call their home away from home. The following guests were honored as an distinguished visitor after visiting Aruba for 10 years : Margaret Garris, Barbara & Paul Dundin and also George & Diane Garabedian and Santiago & Adriana Santos were honored as an Ambassador of goodwill. Pictured Mr. Ricardo Croes together with all honorees and also Moraima Giel from the Aruba Beach Club. □

Performance was preview of this week's dance workshop

Club di Moviemiento & Koslov International give Dance performance at Paseo



By Jan Falcone

Special to Aruba Today

PALM BEACH - On Saturday evening at Paseo Herencia Mall in Palm Beach, Club di Movimiento and Koslov

International performed several pieces from their upcoming production on Saturday night at Cas di Cultura at 8 P.M., August 29.

Five boys performed

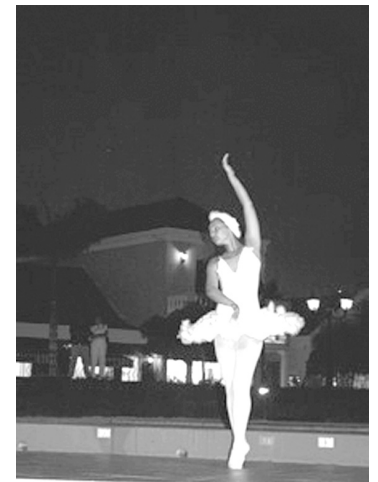


a new Russian dance, choreographed by Leonid Koslov, as well as a variation of Swan Lake. Adriana Koslov performed solo, the Arabian dance from the Nutcracker. There were many in the audience, who received a surprise treat. And it was just a sampling of what is to come this coming Saturday night!

Anyone can sign up for the ballet and modern workshops being held Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 3 to 6 p.m.

Each of the days from 3 to 4, Leonid Koslov of Koslov International, will give a classical ballet workshop to those interested, followed by Christine Daiken's modern

workshop from 4 to 5. From 5 to 6, a contemporary Buglisi class will be given with choreography for the performance on Saturday. Adults and children are welcome, and can sign up at Club di Movimiento in Bubali, Classes will be held in the studios at the back of the Cas di Cultura Bldg. □



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July 16th	Seaport	AWG 7500
July 23th	Crystal	AWG 7500 + weekend stay
July 30th	Seaport	AWG 7500 + weekend stay

August 6th	Crystal	AWG 7500
August 13th	Seaport	AWG 7500
August 20th	Crystal	AWG 7500 + weekend stay
August 27th	Seaport	AWG 7500 + weekend stay

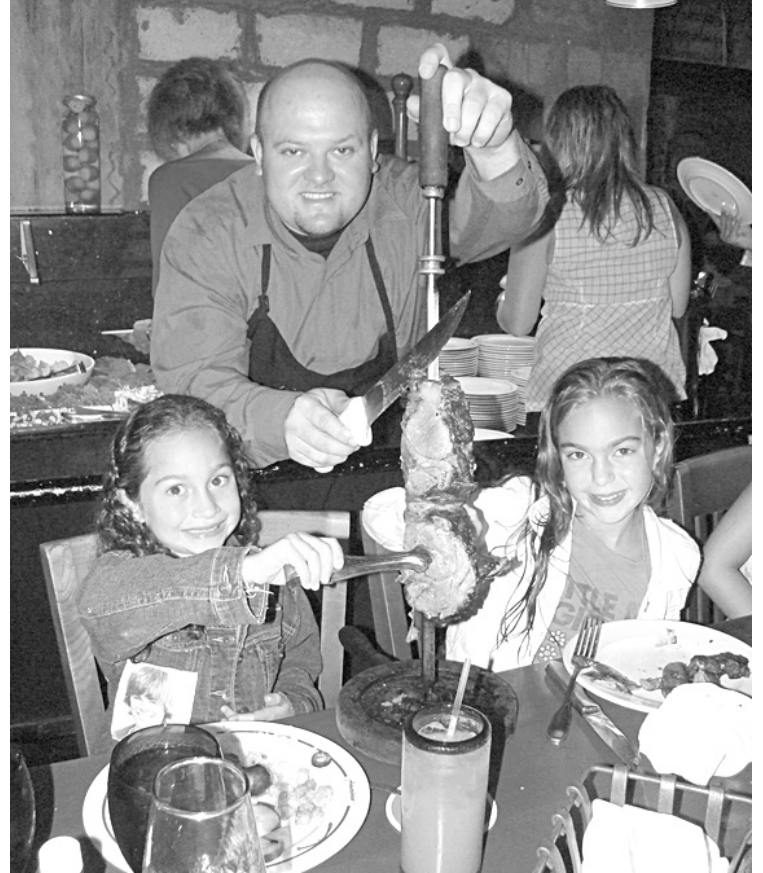
September 3rd	Crystal	AWG 7500
September 10th	Seaport	AWG 7500
September 17th	Crystal	AWG 7500 + weekend stay
September 24th	Seaport	AWG 7500 + weekend stay

For more information please call: 523-6318 of 523-6437
Winner must be present at the drawing with valid ID to claim their prize.



Renaissance Curaçao Resort & Casino

Aruba's Repeat Guests love Amazonia

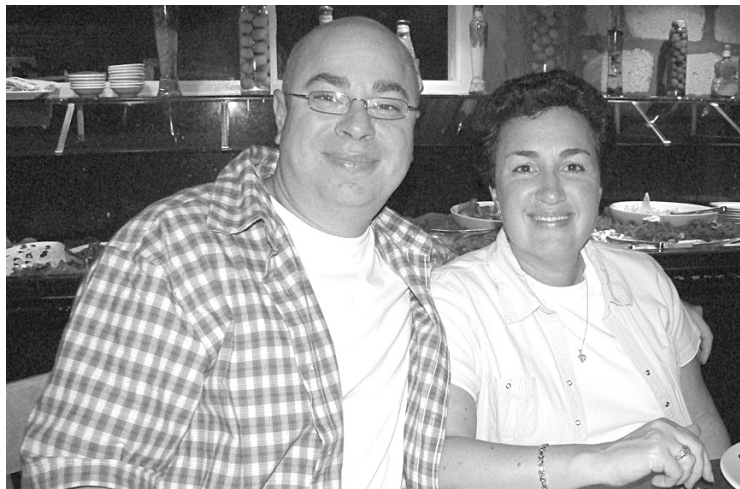


Palm Beach – Aruba's repeat visitors always remember to leave a night open for the Amazonia Churrascaria meat-

lovers' feast. On Sunday, the Marcs celebrated their anniversary in the company of their three children, counting their

blessings for seventeen years of marriage.

The Marcs are staying at Playa Linda, and while they are first-timers here, they are sharing their vacation experience with the Mudloffs, who have been to the island one dozen times, also staying at Playa Linda with their two kids. Elisa Panek, celebrated here 25th birthday and while it is her first time here, she is sharing her vacation experience with family Meadus, from NY, staying at Casa del Mar, island repeat visitors for the past TWENTY year. □



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day with the Discover Scuba Dive Course, get PADI certified or join us on our daily one and two tank dives. Red Sail Sports is Aruba's lead-ing dive and watersports operator. Activity desks are located at the Hyatt Regency, Marriott Resorts and on Renaissance Island.

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"Early Bird: daily 5-7pm
3-course dinner
for \$29.75 per person"

Experience Papillon's gripping story! Introducing a catching special for the early Birds

PALM BEACH - Henri Charrière, one of the world's most famous prisoners, would surely have had the time of his life at Papillon Restaurant in The Village, across from the Radisson Resort. Nicknamed Papillon because of the butterfly tattoo on his chest, the Frenchman was the first convict to escape from Devil's Island, something that nobody had ever done before. Charrière's thrilling, gripping...

auto-biography has been the concept behind Papillon Restaurant. The décor, the decorations and especially the restroom's wink at the thirteen terrible years Papillon spent in prison in French Guyana. Papillon restaurant's menu reflects the Frenchman's arduous journey to freedom: classic French dishes have been dusted with daring Caribbean flair and are a culinary journey for your taste buds. The spacious outside terrace is perfect for casual fine dining; the iron bars, flecks of rust and stains on the walls make one very glad not to be in Papillon's shoes in the 1940's! Charrière would undoubtedly have loved 'his' place on Aruba: this is luxury living for anyone!

Early Bird

Papillon Restaurant offers a daily Early Bird special. A delicious 3-course meal with a glass of house wine for just \$29.75 per person between 5pm and 7pm

Opening hours

Papillon's opening hours are from 5 pm until midnight. The restaurant's daily specials will be explained by the staff. For reservations, please call 586 5400 or go to www.papillonaruba.com.

Papillon Restaurant is located in The Village, just across from the Radisson Resort.

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WEST POINT – At the end of two full days of competition, the 15th annual Aruba Pro-Am golf tournament came to a successful conclusion at an award dinner hosted by Ventanas del Mar restaurant, Tierra del Sol club-house. Two teams from Venezuela with golf pros Jose Montero and Jaime Acevedo finished in first and second place respectively; while amateurs Edoardo Ferrari and Jose Cabello, both from Venezuela shot the longest drives; Harold Hagens, from Aruba & Darryl Roshevuel, from Curacao,

Golf Awards at Tierra del Sol Golf Course

came closest to the pin. A special recognition was given by the organization, in conjunction with the Aruba Tourism Authority, to the founder of the tournament, Andrew 'Boefi' Barbour, who started the world class golf event fifteen years ago as the Johnny Walker International Pro-Am, during his term with the Aruba Trading Company. The recognition handed over by Junior Croes of the Aruba Trading Company and by Fritz Israel of the Aruba Tourism Authority visibly moved Boefi, who graciously



accepted the recognition, having been an advocate of Aruba as a premier golf destination for many years. The culinary team of Ventanas del Mar restaurant, Tierra del Sol club-house served a gourmet plated dinner to the golfers and their hosts, taking off with a sweet corn and lemongrass soup, followed by Marinated and Grilled Rack of Lamb with Mediterranean Couscous, and culminating with a delicious, cool Champagne Saffron Sabayon.



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products! Ideally located in front of the Occidental Resort (Former Allegro), they are visited both by individuals and families alike, as we have a kids playground and a kids menu to entertain them, so they can enjoy their dinner as much as you will yours! We have entertainment every night at 8PM, and even after dinner the perfect night out continues, as you can shop till you drop since the shops on our friendly square are open until eleven. See what its like to experience real fresh dining joy with a twist!

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At Divi Phoenix Resort

Lauren and Mark vow eternal love



DIVI PHOENIX -On July 30, 2009, Lauren Jean Scelia, 30 and Mark Anthony Chiarieri, 33 of Highland, New York vowed their love and said “I Do”

The lovebirds have been together for 12 years after meeting at a part-time job that they both had when they started college. Lauren met Mark her senior year of high school and became great friends. They began dating her first year in college.

Mark proposed to Lauren when he came to visit her after transferring to another college

to finish her Bachelor’s degree.

After traveling for eight hours in a snow storm Mark pulled out of his pocket something that he said was burning a hole in his pocket, THE RING. A simple proposal full of love

Both of them made the decision to wait until they were both done with college and started their careers. Mark got his BA in education from Mount Saint Mary’s College and is now an English Teacher and Track and Field coach. Lauren received her M.S. in Social Work from Columbia University and is a Licensed Master Social



Worker and currently provides therapeutic services to an adult population.

Lauren & Mark decided to have a small intimate ceremony on a beach with a larger reception for family and friends a week after their return home. After hearing all of the amazing experiences of their friends and family in Aruba they knew it was a magical place.

The beach wedding took place at Divi Phoenix Resort. As Lauren walked down the aisle she amazed Mark of her precious beauty. Her was adorned with red roses to match her elegant bouquet. The officiate Andy Osbourne delivered the romantic sermon

as Lauren and Mark exchanged rings and vows with each other.

After the ‘Once in a Lifetime’ photo shoot with Bella Aruba Photography the newlyweds sat down to a romantic dinner overlooking the sunset at Sunset Bistro located at the resort.

“After arriving on the island we were amazed at just how beautiful it was! We had high hopes for the ceremony but were absolutely blown away with how amazing it was. As we sat eating our dinner on the beach after the ceremony we just sat smiling at each other and raving about the experience. We could never

have imagined that it would be that amazing. Lissy & Rita of Ceremonies & Celebration in Aruba, Angela of Bella Aruba Photography, and Marietta the hairdresser made this day an unforgettable day that we will never forget , we can never thank them enough”, stated the newlyweds and added “Being so far away as I am from New York, having Lissy as a wedding planner really made the experience relaxing and enjoyable. All the details were perfect...Aruba is definitely one happy and hospitable island. We look forward to our return and would like to explore the southern part of the island.□





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Wescot-Williams attends dollarization conference

W I L L E M S T A D - - Democratic Party (DP) Leader Island Councilwoman Sarah Wescot-Williams is in Curaçao for the one-day conference on "Opportunities and Risks of Dollarization in the Dutch Caribbean," being held in the auditorium of Central Bank of the Netherlands Antilles. This conference will deal with opportunities, risks and effects of dollarization for St. Maarten, Curacao and the BES Islands (Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba). Several high level financial experts are scheduled to speak at the conference, organised by Minister of Finance Ersilia de Lannooy. Featured speakers include

Central Bank President Emsley Tromp, Aruba Central Bank President Jane Semeleer, Lars Moller of the World Bank and Mark O'Brien of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Several people from St. Maarten are to be part of the panel discussions in the afternoon, including Windward Islands Bank (WIB) Managing Director Jan Beaujon, Princess Juliana International Airport President Eugene Holiday, Small Business Development Foundation Executive Director Ludwig Ouenniche and St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association (SHTA) President Emil Lee. They will be joined on the panels by their counterparts in

Curaçao. Wescot-Williams, who will return home Tuesday, said the conference is of high importance to the future of the island as it works to country status. She added that DP will seek to work with government and businesses to bring information about dollarization to the people of St. Maarten. "The sooner this can be done, the better." There has been a drastic move in favour of dollarization coming from Curaçao in the past months. St. Maarten's financial experts had suggested the possibility of adopting the dollar as the currency for the new countries in the early 2000s. However, at that time, there was not much support coming from

Curaçao for the move. The islands have a political agreement to establish a joint Central Bank with a rotating presidency between St. Maarten and Curaçao and a joint currency. "This makes it urgent that the people of both islands get as much information regarding the currency options," said Wescot-Williams, who is a former Constitutional Affairs and Finance Commissioner. Dollarization has been prompted recently as an attractive option for Curaçao and St. Maarten by Tromp, a feature speaker of the conference, in his yearly economic report. With this new push to

Bank may no longer be needed if the islands decide to go this route. The BES Islands, which will become Dutch dependencies, have already chosen to dollarize. The dollarization conference has generated enormous interest. To satisfy this interest throughout the Netherlands Antilles, the forum will be simulcast on radio, Internet and television. Curaçao radio station 92.1 FM, TeleCuraçao (on Channel 9 rather than its regular Channel 8 on St. Maarten Cable) and Website www.direct107.com will broadcast the dollarization conference. People in Bonaire can also listen via Digital 91.1 FM



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Michael Jackson's mother praises Vienna tribute

By VERONIKA OLEKSYN,
Associated Press Writer

VIENNA – The King of Pop's mother said in a letter made public Monday that next month's global tribute for Michael Jackson in Vienna is "a wonderful idea" and an event that her son would have loved.

The Sept. 26 concert — being planned by Jackson's brother Jermaine — will take place in front of a 17th-century palace in the Austrian capital. The performers haven't been announced, but the event is expected to draw thousands of people.

"An event of this dimension not only keeps Michael's spirit alive, more than that: It gives millions of fans the opportunity to experience his music and celebrate the life of my son," Katherine Jackson

wrote. "I am sure Michael would love it."

The hand-signed letter is dated Thursday and was made public by the Austrian event promoters, World Awards Media GmbH.

Michael Jackson died aged 50 on June 25.

Event promoter Georg Kindel has said the tribute was originally planned for London's Wembley Stadium on Aug. 29, which would have been Jackson's 51st birthday, but that Jermaine Jackson decided instead on Vienna. Austria is home to many castles, and Jermaine has said Vienna was chosen as the venue because his brother "loved castles."

In the letter, Katherine Jackson said she immediately considered Jermaine's plan — announced several weeks after

he visited Vienna to receive an award in his brother's honor — "a wonderful idea."

"I fully support Jermaine's endeavors to spread Michael's important message of making a better world for us all," she wrote.

Jackson's mother also reached out to fans, saying she was "overwhelmed by the worldwide love and support that my beloved son Michael has received over the past month."

Last week, fans swamped the Web site offering tribute tickets, with prices ranging from \$264.00 to \$264,742).

Nina Ellend, head of publicity at WorldAwardsMediaGmbH, said thousands of tickets have been snapped up and that the sale was happening in stages. Austrian media have reported that Madonna, U2, Lionel Richie and Whitney Houston might be among the performers. However, the tribute's Web site says only that the lineup will include "some of the most popular contemporary artists." □

Police: Drug ring used comic books to launder cash

By P. SOLOMON BANDA,
Associated Press Writer

DENVER – Two brothers accused of running a drug ring that imported and distributed millions of dollars worth of methamphetamine in Denver bought hundreds of collector comic books to launder the money, authorities said Monday. Police seized comic books worth at least \$500,000 while arresting Aaron Castro, 29, of Commerce City and Alfonzo Castro, 30, of Denver, Colorado Attorney General John Suthers said.

"It was their intent to launder money, and their choice was collector comic books," Suthers said. Some of the seized comic books were first edition Superman and Batman publications encased in protective plastic covers, Adams County District Attorney Don Quick said.

"It appeared as they were working on a startup company for high-end comic books," he said. One of the comic books was worth about \$3,500. □



FILE - In this July 24, 2009, file photo, Sen. Joseph Lieberman, I-Conn., gestures during an interview with The Associated Press in Washington. Lieberman, an independent senator the Democrats are counting on as they consider outflanking the GOP on health care legislation showed signs of wavering Sunday, Aug. 23, 2009, when he urged President Barack Obama to postpone many of his initiatives because of the economic downturn.

(AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

Alec Baldwin passing on challenge to Lieberman

HARTFORD, Conn. – A spokesman for Alec Baldwin says the actor has no plans to challenge Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman in the 2012 election.

Matthew Hiltzik said Monday that Baldwin does not plan to move to Connecticut or to run. He says the "30 Rock" star wants Lieberman to stay in office because there are so few moderate Republicans in the Senate. Lieberman was re-elected in 2006 as an independent after he lost the Democratic primary.

Baldwin was quoted in Playboy magazine this summer as saying he would love to run against Lieberman. His brother, Stephen Baldwin, said last week that his older brother is serious about politics.

On CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday, Lieberman said he respects Baldwin as an actor but dared him to "make my day" with a Senate challenge. □



In this handout photo provided by AEG, pop star Michael Jackson rehearses at the Staples Center in Los Angeles on Tuesday, June 23, 2009.

(AP Photo/Kevin Mazur, AEG/Getty Images)



FILE - In this April 20, 2001 file photo, a bouquet of fresh flowers adorns the crypt of movie star Marilyn Monroe at Westwood Village Memorial Park Cemetery in Los Angeles' Westwood District.

(AP Photo/Reed Saxon, file)

Crypt above Marilyn Monroe sells for \$4.6 million

LOS ANGELES – The price for spending eternity above Marilyn Monroe is \$4.6 million.

That's how much the crypt directly above the actress went for in an online auction that ended Monday.

The eBay.com listing says the space at Westwood Village Memorial Park Cemetery above Monroe is being vacated, making room for someone else. The listing also offers the detail that the current occupant is "looking face down on" Monroe.

Bidding for the auction started at \$500,000 on Aug 14. Monroe was laid to rest at the cemetery in 1962. □

BUSINESS

Aruba TODAY

Stocks pull off earlier highs, financials retreat



Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, August 24, 2009. U.S. stocks rose to 10-month highs on Monday, extending last week's gains as investors became even more optimistic about signs that major world economies were emerging from recession.

REUTERS/Brendan McDermid (UNITED STATES BUSINESS)

By SARA LEPRO,
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK — Investors slowed their hectic buying of stocks Monday, leaving the major indexes little changed after a four-day advance.

Stocks pulled back from early highs as financials, which have been surging lately, retreated. Meanwhile, Treasury prices rallied ahead of the next round of debt auctions.

Analysts had expected a pause after stocks soared last week, lifting the Dow Jones industrials 370 points. The advance picked up momentum Friday after Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke declared that the economy is on the verge of recovery.

"I think people still believe there are signs of recovery here, but it doesn't hurt to take a little bit of profits," said Alan Villalon, senior research analyst at First American Funds.

Market experts have been warning, though, the market's upbeat mood could be tested with reports this week on consumer confidence and housing. Some signs of recovery have emerged already in housing, but consumers are still struggling. Improved consumer confidence and spending is widely seen as one of the keys that could help end the recession.

"We're lining up here in advance of the data this week,"

said James Cox, managing partner at Harris Financial Group. "This is a good time to get out."

Bank shares gave up some of their early gains and traded mixed, weighed down by losses among regional banks. Investors have been worried that smaller banks could face significant hardships in the coming months as losses among commercial real estate loans pile up.

In a research note late Sunday, Rochdale Securities banking analyst Richard Bove predicted that 150 to 200 more U.S. banks could fail in the current banking crisis on top of the 81 banks that have already failed this year.

The Dow rose 3.32, or less than 0.1 percent, to 9,509.28, after earlier rising as much as 82 points. The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 0.56, or 0.1 percent, to 1,025.57, while the Nasdaq composite index fell 2.92, or 0.1 percent, to 2,017.98.

Advancing issues were slightly ahead of losers on the New York Stock Exchange, where volume came to 1.23 billion shares.

In other trading, the Russell 2000 index of smaller companies slipped 1.27, or 0.2 percent, to 580.24.

Bond prices rose as investors prepared for \$197 billion in auctions this week. The yield on the benchmark 10-year

Treasury note fell to 3.48 percent from 3.57 percent late Friday, while the yield on the three-month T-bill fell to 0.15 percent from 0.16 percent.

The markets have been choppy as investors react to mixed economic data, but managed last week to post four straight advances. The Standard & Poor's 500 index is up 52 percent since early March.

"We still think there is a lot of fear out there," said Ryan Detrick, chief technical strategist at Schaeffer's Investment Research.

"The economy has to validate what the stock market has done."

Justin Golden, strategist at Macro Risk Advisors in New York, said some of the market's gains have been magnified by short-covering, in which investors have to buy stock after having earlier sold borrowed shares in a bet they would fall.

"A lot of bear investors have thrown in the towel," he said. "That shouldn't be confused with people being ultra bullish about the market."

Investors were also anxious ahead of the Conference Board's consumer confidence index on Tuesday, and the Reuters/University of Michigan report on consumer sentiment Friday. The Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller index on home prices for June will be released Tuesday, while the Commerce Department reports on new home sales for July on Wednesday.

Japan's Nikkei stock average surged 3.4 percent, while China's main index was up for a third straight day, gaining 1.1 percent. A slide in the index last week triggered selling around the world.

Britain's FTSE 100 rose 0.9 percent, while Germany's DAX index and France's CAC-40 rose 1.0 percent.

Oil prices rose 48 cents to \$74.37 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

The dollar rose slightly against other major currencies, while gold prices fell. □



A money changer counts yen banknotes in Singapore. The dollar and the euro climbed against the safe-haven yen on Monday as hopes grew that the world economy was heading towards a recovery following positive US data, dealers said.

(AFP/File/Theresa Barraclough)

Dollar, euro rise against 'safe' yen

LONDON (AFP) — The dollar and the euro climbed against the safe-haven yen on Monday as hopes grew that the world economy was heading towards a recovery following positive US data, dealers said.

In late morning trade here, the euro rose to 135.49 yen from 135.21 yen in New York late on Friday. Against the dollar, the euro fell to 1.4299 dollars from 1.4328.

The dollar climbed to 94.79 yen from 94.35 yen late on Friday. The Japanese currency, seen as a safe bet during the economic crisis, was sold off as investor risk appetite improved, dealers said.

Comments by Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke and US housing data issued last Friday added to optimism that the global recession was easing.

"Fed Chairman Bernanke's speech on Friday... remains the key near-term driver of currency markets," said Lee Hardman, economist at the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ in London.

"The market has taken heart from the cautiously optimistic tone of speech which combined with the much stronger than expected US existing home sales report has helped reinvigorate risk sentiment."

Hardman added: "The yen has been the clear underperformer amongst safe-havens, in contrast to the dollar which notably has held its ground against the major currencies."

Markets were anticipating more positive US economic figures this week after a surprisingly strong jump in US existing-home sales, to a two-year high, continued to lift global equity markets on Monday.

Traders also reacted positively to Bernanke's comment that the prospects for a global economic recovery "appear good", and to a eurozone purchasing managers' index published Friday that rose to a 15-month high in August. □

Aruba TODAY

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Printing N.V.
Westraat # 22

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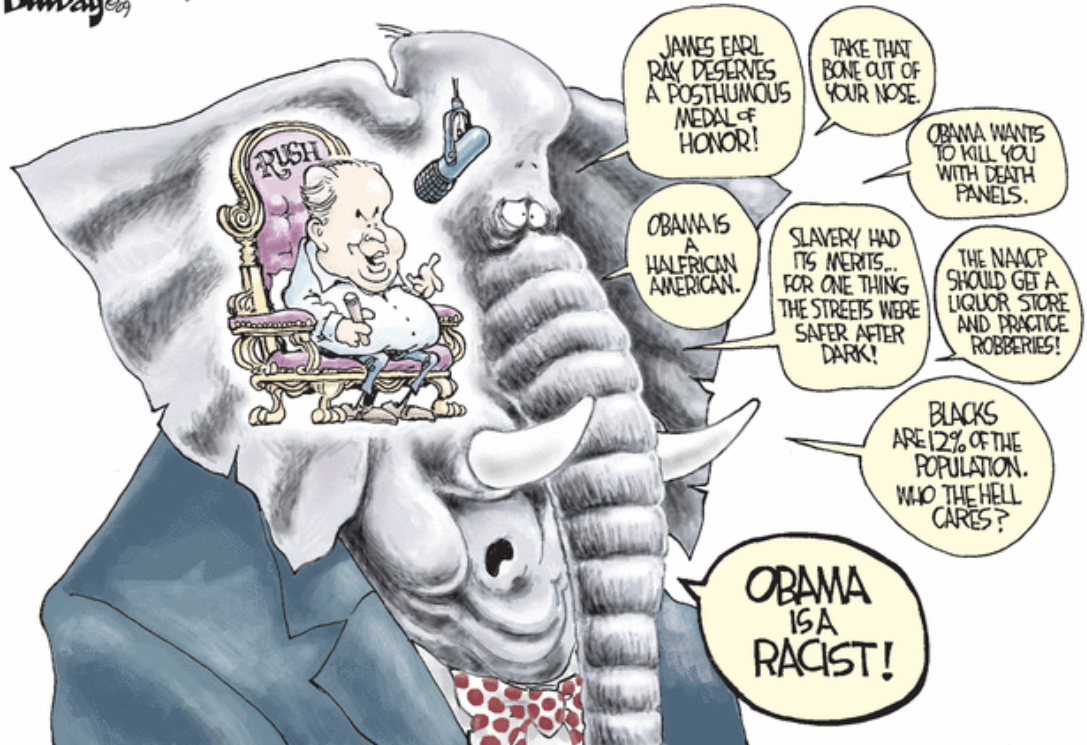
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BillDay



History's shadow over Obama's Vineyard vacation

By Wendy Williams

Mashpee, Mass. – On Martha's Vineyard island, in the wealthy town of Chilmark where Barack Obama is vacationing this week, sits a strange, rather ancient stone wall hidden in the protected woodlands. It ends at a large boulder – Waskosim's Rock – perched atop a hill. The wall, known locally as "the Middle Line," is a kind of New World version of the Great Wall of China. Laid out in the 17th century, it separated lands claimed by the English from those of the indigenous Wampanoag people.

The Middle Line was a Puritan era plea for racial peace: Can't we all just get along? Unfortunately, the answer was "No." Not long after the boundary was laid down, transgressions recommenced. The Wampanoags retreated even farther west, winding up near the Gay Head cliffs, where they remain to this day. "You're seeing an example of colonists and Indians trying to find a way to deal with their problems without shedding each other's blood," says historian David J. Silverman, who wrote an excellent account of this subject, "Faith and Boundaries." Although a colonial-period Indian war never broke out on Martha's Vineyard, bitterness has persisted through the four centuries, symbolized by the wall itself. Indians often talk about "the white man" in angry tones; whites frequently use the words "we" and "they" when talking about the history of the conflict, even if their own ancestors arrived long after the wall's construction. When President Obama chose Martha's Vineyard as his summer destination, he chose an 87-square-mile island that, despite its size, is a microcosm of the race problem that burdens America. But on this island, there exist some very ironic twists. Our president will reportedly be staying at Blue Heron Farm, one of the island's most expensive gentleman's farms, purchased recently for about \$20 million by William and Molly Van Devender, whites from Mississippi and big-time financial supporters of the Republican Party. Our president will vacation on land once allotted to the Wampanoags during the Middle Line era – an historical fact with which the president himself is probably unfamiliar. And today, because

Massachusetts law allows ownership down to the mean low-tide mark, even walking the beachfront is forbidden to the indigenous people. Should our Kansan-Kenyan-American president feel guilty? If the land had been lifted from local people three years ago, instead of 300, would that make a difference?

Obama could chew over these questions at length with his friend Henry Louis Gates, were he so inclined. This past Thursday, Professor Gates hosted his annual forum on race relations at the Vineyard's Old Whaling Church, built in 1843 by very wealthy and very white whaling captains. This year's program was entitled "Achieving Equality in the Age of Obama." None of the evening's panelists were Wampanoag.

Gates lives in a large white house on land also once claimed by the Wampanoag. When it comes to that house, he is not without awareness of racial overtones. He has held fund-raisers for Obama and for Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick in the house, and he once told island journalist Laura Roosevelt that he loves the irony of the building's "neo-plantation look." He also said "the Island must have the highest concentration in the world of successful, middle- and upper-class black people."

Should he feel guilty? Should he pay reparations to the Wampanoag tribe?

I ask not to make Gates wrong, but to point to a larger issue that America must eventually face head on: What is the value of knowing our history, if we cannot transcend it? How do we hold on to our history, honor those who have been disenfranchised – and still move forward confidently into the 21st century?

"Something there is that doesn't love a wall," warned New Englander Robert Frost in his poem "Mending Wall" nearly a century ago. "Before I built a wall I'd ask to know What I was walling in or walling out, And to whom I was like to give offence." Before I became a journalist, I served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Senegal. Since then I have returned to Africa many times. My career has also taken me frequently to Europe, the Caribbean, and Mexico. All over the world, I have had insightful and challenging conversations about race, empire, and development. □

Compassion in the Lockerbie release

By the Monitor's Editorial Board

Compassion and mercy are legitimate tools in administering justice. But they lose their meaning when politics enters the picture, as in the case of the release of the "Lockerbie bomber."

Abdelbaset al-Megrahi – the only person convicted in the 1988 explosion of a US-bound Pan Am jet over Lockerbie, Scotland – was released Aug. 20 after serving eight years of a life sentence amounting to a minimum of 27 years. Scottish Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill granted the release, which was requested by the prisoner, on compassionate grounds due to a diagnosed terminal illness.

Mr. Megrahi received a hero's welcome from crowds bused to the Tripoli airport by authorities (contrary to Libyan assurances of a low-key reception). Mr. MacAskill received scathing criticism – especially from American families of the 270 victims of the suitcase bombing of Flight 103, and also from US officials.

FBI director Robert Mueller said the release gave comfort to terrorists. Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, called it "obviously a political decision." Loved ones of those killed are outraged that a convicted terrorist, who never showed remorse, was let go early. President Obama called the release "a mistake."

Today, MacAskill was again forced to defend his decision, this time before a special session of the Scottish parliament. Compassionate release is a regular feature of the Scottish judicial system, and can come into play when a prisoner is thought to be close to death. In the US, too, presidents and governors show mercy through their power to pardon.

Last week, MacAskill admitted that Megrahi had shown no compassion to the victims, but "that alone is not a reason for us to deny compassion to him and his family in his final days."

Scottish justice demands that "judgment be imposed but compassion be available," he explained, adding that the atrocity of the crime "should not be a basis for losing sight of who we are, the values we seek to uphold." Indeed, those values help distinguish civilization from terrorism.

But the politics around the Lockerbie case make it impossible to judge the merits of this decision. Consider these circumstances:

The decision by Libya to hand over Megrahi for prosecution in 1999 was itself part of an international political bargain in which Libya could throw off global sanctions in exchange for extradition of suspects and compensation to victims' families.

Now suspicion is rife that the release is part of a larger trade, oil, and gas understanding between Britain and Libya. The son of Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi said Megrahi was part of such talks. The British government doesn't deny discussions, but calls the rumored deal "wrong," "implausible," and "offensive."

And yet, in a warming of relations with Libya, the British government of former Prime Minister Tony Blair worked out a prisoner transfer agreement with Libya that was finally ratified by the British Parliament in April. The deal notably did not exclude Megrahi.

The politics between London and Edinburgh may also come into play. The "devolution" of authority to Scotland grants it more independence from the United Kingdom and often puts the two capitals at odds. London may have found a convenient scapegoat in Edinburgh on this one.

And then there are suspicions surrounding the prosecution of the case itself. The belief among families of some British and Irish Lockerbie victims is that the prosecution was deeply flawed, that the British government is involved in a "coverup," and that Megrahi himself may be innocent – as he claims.

In 2007, a Scottish judicial review found grounds for Megrahi's appeal, which the former prisoner dropped in advance of his release.

Was the release a compromise that spared Scotland possible embarrassment that might come out in an appeal?

MacAskill vehemently maintains that the release decision was his alone and made solely on the grounds of compassion. It's hard to hear him, however, when the gale-force winds of suspicion and politics are howling. □

Sunset Grille, a prime Steakhouse offering Spa Cuisine



Palm Beach – The Sunset Grille at the Radisson Aruba Resort Casino & Spa needs no introduction. The award winning American steakhouse with its chic, cosmopolitan atmosphere headlines Prime Beef, the highest grade U.S.D.A -- only 2% of all beef is graded prime, required to age a minimum of 4 weeks. While steaks and chops make up the heart of the menu, the resort's Restaurant Chef Maarten Smeets innovated

unparalleled appetizers and extraordinary desserts, which helped the Sunset Grille achieve the Triple AAA's elite four-diamond status – a rare feat for steakhouses. Sunset Grille well-known as the number one steakhouse in Aruba offers also spa cuisine, for the health conscious visitors, featuring appetizers, salads and a wide array of seafood selections.

The spa cuisine dishes are balanced by enhancing

flavors with citrus, spice and herbs and taste is elevated by marinating, smoking and grilling, Smeets explains.

“We now use many more herbs, vegetables, grains and fibers,” he adds, “all designed to sustain a healthier life style; and we stay away from saturated fats and refined sugars, as well as use salt sparingly,” he informs.

“The Sunset Grille kitchen,” Smeets reveals, “uses no trans fats, and our guests,” he banters, “stay healthy, wealthy and wise with our new and exciting spa cuisine.”

Among the patrons favorite dishes are, the Sunset Grille's famous Chop House Martini Salad, “Shaken not Stirred,” the lobster bisque with a pastry crust, the various cuts of prime beef, the popular Rack of Lamb, Stuffed Quail and the delicious Veal Oscar.

The spa cuisine features items such as Tuna Tataki, the Spinach Salad, Chilean Seabass, grilled Swordfish and the Asian style Salmon



to cut corners, especially when it comes to buying, aging and cutting meat. No wonder the readers of Caribbean Travel & Life named it the top restaurant in the Caribbean. □



Life's a Beach at the Juggling Fish

Palm Beach -- The Juggling Fish at Playa Linda Beach Resort is designed to stimulate your shopping instincts, as the beautiful store is hard to resist. What you'll find on the oceanfront boardwalk is absolutely gorgeous: hand picked gifts, souvenirs, beach

and resort wear, it's all on display a few steps from the water.

The tastefully arranged store is signature Boston-born Jodi Tobman, also the owner of the brand-new Lazy Lizard, in the South Beach Centre. You will find a great selection of

kid gifts here. In fact an entire inner section is dedicated to gifts with a tropical appeal for babies and toddlers, among them whimsical plush stuffed iguanas, parrots and seahorses. Moreover, a bonanza of fridge magnets, hand-made silver jewelry, batik beach



wraps, throws and hats also awaits you.

Gift hunters will be pleased with the array of scented candles and candleholders. The store offers convenient barefootbrowsingpossibilities and is located within a short walking distance from the Hyatt Regency and the Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort. The Juggling Fish at Playa Linda fits nicely into that resort's “Life's a Beach” philosophy. Open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday and on Sunday, when the rest of the island is at a standstill, the helpful staff at the Juggling Fish Playa

Linda beach Resort is eager to serve you with a smile from 9 a.m. till 6 p.m. Tel.: +297 586 4999. Email: orders@salamanderholdings.com □



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EAGLE BEACH - Oasis Luxury Condominiums is a Mediterranean-style designed complex located on the prestigious Eagle Beach right next to Chalet Suisse consisting of a total of 35 units distributed on five (5) floors. The one, two and three bedroom suites have a perfect view of the ocean and beach. The units include, among other amenities, floor to ceiling glass doors and panoramic windows, spacious terraces, marble bathrooms, European kitchens

**35 EXCLUSIVE OCEAN VIEW UNITS
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The entrance of the building has a drive-up covered entrance and an elegant two-story lobby leading to the sun-filled hallways and corridors. The common area will facilitate the owners with a well-equipped gym overlooking the gardens and the pool.

with granite counter tops and a full stainless steel appliance package including washer and dryer. This 35-condominium complex will feature a beautiful swimming pool with a beach style entry with waterfalls and fountain and state of the art fiber optic lighting. The entrance of the building has a drive-up covered entrance and an elegant two-story lobby leading to the sun-filled hallways and corridors. The common area will facilitate the owners with a well-equipped gym overlooking the gardens and the pool.

The garden will feel like an oasis true to the projects name. There will also be a recreation room and sofas throughout the common area to lounge and relax. Further amenities include a 24/7 security, a full concierge and a rental program for the owners who want to earn a return on their investment. The concierge service will be helpful to assist the owners in making their 'homecoming' a very pleasant return. Each condo will have one designated parking space exclusive to the owners. Construction on Oasis at Eagle

Beach is moving fast. Fifteen of the thirty five units have already been sold. The condominiums will be ready for occupancy by March 2010. Oasis is located on Eagle Beach which allows for an easy access, even on foot, to the best casinos, restaurants, golf courses, shopping areas and night life the Aruba has to offer. The experienced sales team of Oasis invites you for a visit to learn about this new gem on the beach.

The site tour will take you up in the complex where you will enjoy spectacular views of the ocean and beach as well as a wonderful view of Oranjestad where the cruise ships are docked. The views from the rooftop terrace are stunning to say the least. The Oasis sales team is ready to assist you.

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"fresh seafood" really mean. What Herby catches will be served in his restaurant on

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12 noon and from 1pm to 5pm. A charter includes: captain, mate, all fishing equipment, bait, sodas and bottled water. On a full day charter sandwiches and snacks are also included. You can call Herby directly at (297) 592 4040 or go to www.driftwoodaruba.com.

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Driftwood Restaurant

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www.driftwoodaruba.com

Opening hours: every day, but Tuesdays from 5pm till 10:30pm.





On Top Of The News

Email: news@arubatoday.com

Tuesday, August 25, 2009



Deputy White House Press Secretary Bill Burton conducts the daily press briefing of media at a makeshift filing center in the gym at the Oak Bluffs School in Oak Bluffs, Mass., Monday, Aug. 24, 2009.

Associated Press

'Inhumane' CIA questioning spurs criminal investigation

DEVLIN BARRETT

PAMELA HESS

Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — CIA threats to kill a suspect's children and other cruel interrogation tactics spurred the Obama administration to launch a criminal investigation Monday into "inhumane" methods once secretly used against terror suspects.

A newly declassified internal CIA report found that during the Bush administration's response to the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States, one terror suspect was told his children would be killed if he did not talk, another was led to believe his mother would be sexually assaulted in front of him, and a third was threatened with a gun and a power drill.

Attorney General Eric Holder said he had chosen a veteran prosecutor to determine whether any CIA officers or contractors should face criminal charges for crossing the line.

At the same time, President Barack Obama reached deep inside the nation's security agencies to change how such suspects are treated in the future, although the White House pledged it would keep its hands off the professional investigators doing the work.

The 5-year-old CIA report found the agency used "unauthorized, improvised, inhumane" practices in questioning so-called high-value terror suspects.

The documents released by the CIA's inspector

general said interrogators went too far, even beyond what was authorized under Justice Department legal memos that have since been withdrawn and discredited.

"Ten years from now we're going to be sorry we're doing this, (but) it has to be done," one unidentified CIA officer said in the report, predicting that interrogators would someday have to appear in court to answer for such tactics.

Monday's documents represent the largest single release of information about the Bush administration's once-secret system of capturing terror suspects and interrogating them in overseas prisons.

In one instance, suspect Abd al-Nashiri, alleged mastermind of the 2000 bombing of the U.S. Navy destroyer USS Cole, was hooded and handcuffed and threatened with an unloaded gun and a power drill. The unidentified interrogator also threatened Nashiri's mother and family, implying that they would be sexually abused in front of him, according to the report.

The interrogator denied making a direct threat.

Other interrogators told Sept. 11 mastermind Khalid Sheik Mohammed, "if anything else happens in the United States, 'We're going to kill your children'," one veteran officer said in the report.

Continued on Next Page

AP Source: Coroner rules Jackson's death homicide

THOMAS WATKINS

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Los Angeles County coroner has ruled Michael Jackson's death a homicide and a combination of drugs was the cause, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press, a finding that makes it more likely criminal charges will be filed against the doctor who was with the pop star when he died.

Forensic tests found the powerful anesthetic propofol acted together with at least two sedatives to cause Jackson's death before he died June 25 in his rented Los Angeles mansion, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the findings have not been publicly released.

Dr. Conrad Murray, a Las Vegas cardiologist who became Jackson's personal physician weeks before



FILE - In this March 17, 2005 file photo, pop star Michael Jackson arrives at the Santa Barbara County Courthouse in Santa Maria, Calif.

Associated Press

his death, is the target of a manslaughter investigation by the Los Angeles Police Department. A search warrant affidavit unsealed Monday in Houston includes a detailed account of what Murray told investigators.

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This photograph released by the Scottish Parliament shows Scottish Justice Minister Kenny MacAskill making a statement to the Scottish Parliament on the decision to release Lockerbie bomber Libyan Abdel Baset al-Megrahi Monday Aug. 24, 2009 in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Associated Press

Scottish government defends Lockerbie bomber's release

BEN McCONVILLE

Associated Press Writer

EDINBURGH, Scotland (AP) — Scotland's justice minister defended his much-criticized decision to free the Lockerbie bomber, as the U.S. State Department said that though it disagreed "passionately" the move would not affect relations between America and Britain.

Continued on Page B6

INHUMANE

Continued from Page B1

Death threats violate anti-torture laws, and the interrogator denied making a direct threat.

In another instance, an interrogator pinched the carotid artery of a detainee until he started to pass out, then shook him awake. He did this three times. The interrogator said he had never been taught how to conduct detainee questioning.

Investigators credited the detention-and-interrogation program for developing key intelligence that prevented multiple attacks against Americans. One CIA operative interviewed for the report said the program thwarted al-Qaida plots to attack the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan, derail trains, blow up gas stations and cut the suspension line of a bridge. "In this regard, there is no doubt that the program has been effective," investigators wrote, bolstering an argument by former Vice President Dick Cheney and others that the program saved lives.

Another CIA document released Monday said the results of the program with the first detainee were "outstanding," and urged its rapid expansion "in the shortest time possible."

The inspector general said it was unclear whether so-called "enhanced interrogation" tactics contributed to that success, according to the report. Those tactics included waterboarding, a simulated drowning technique that the Obama administration says is torture. Measuring the success of such interrogation is "a more subjective process and not without some concern," the report said.

For instance, the report describes at least one mock execution, which also would



Right: In this April 25, 2006, file photo, John Durham speaks to reporters on the steps of U.S. District Court in New Haven, Conn. **On Monday, Aug. 24, 2009,** Attorney General Eric Holder is assigned prosecutor John Durham to investigate CIA mistreatment of terror suspects. **Left:** In this image from the CIA, the cover of a special review released Monday, Aug. 24, 2009, of a newly declassified CIA document describes how interrogators threatened to kill the children of one Sept. 11 suspect and may have threatened to sexually assault the mother of another detainee.

violate U.S. anti-torture laws. To terrify one prisoner, interrogators pretended to execute the prisoner in a nearby room. A senior officer said it was a transparent ruse that yielded no benefit to interrogators.

As the report was released, Attorney General Eric Holder appointed prosecutor John Durham to open a preliminary investigation into the claims of abuse. Durham already is investigating the destruction of CIA interrogation videos and now will examine whether CIA officers or contractors broke laws in handling of suspects.

The administration also announced Monday that all

U.S. interrogators will follow the rules for detainees laid out by the Army Field Manual. That decision aims to end years of fierce debate over how rough U.S. personnel can get with terror suspects in custody.

Formation of the new interrogation unit for "high-value" detainees does not mean the CIA is out of the business of questioning terror suspects, deputy White House press secretary Bill Burton told reporters covering the vacationing president on Martha's Vineyard island in Massachusetts.

Burton said the unit will include "all these different elements under one group" and

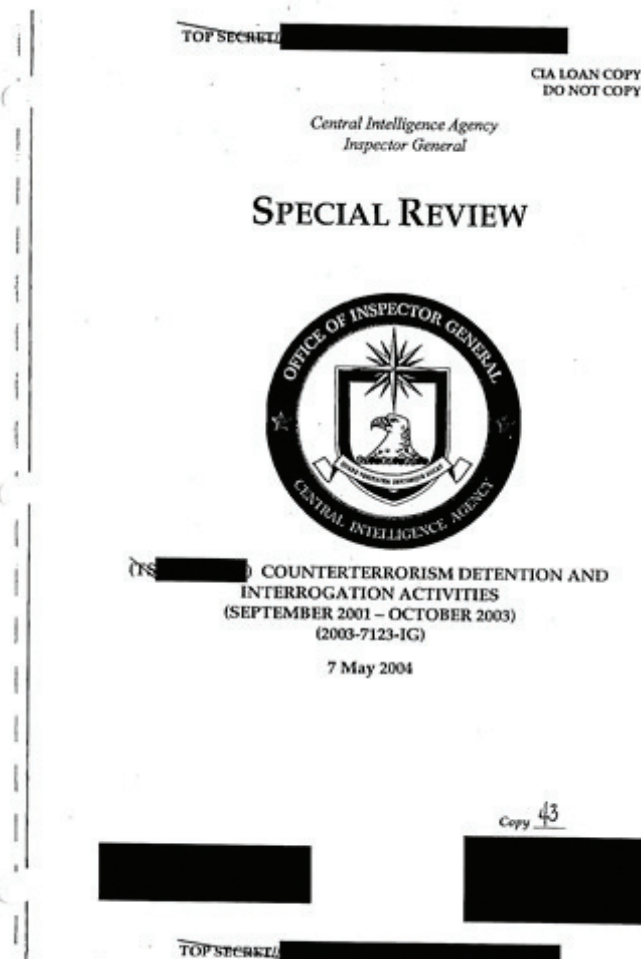
will be at FBI headquarters in Washington.

The structure of the new unit the White House is creating would depart significantly from such work under the previous administration of President George W. Bush, when the CIA had the lead and sometimes exclusive role in questioning al-Qaida suspects.

Obama campaigned vigorously against the Bush administration's interrogation practices in his successful run for the presidency. He has said more recently he did not particularly favor prosecuting Bush administration officials in connection with instances of prisoner abuse.

Nonetheless, the spokesman added, Obama believes the attorney general should be fully independent from the White House, and he has full faith in Holder to make the decision on whether to reopen several such cases with an eye toward possible criminal prosecution. "He ultimately is going to make the decisions," Burton said of Holder.

CIA Director Leon Panetta said in an e-mail message to agency employees Monday that he intends "to stand up for those officers who did what their country asked and who followed the legal guidance they were given. That is the president's position, too," he said. □



Aruba TODAY

KEEP ARUBA CLEAN...

THANKS FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION

In the red, School districts cut yellow bus services

By MONICA RHOR

Associated Press Writer

HOUSTON — As a mother of two, Feleccia Moore-Davis is accustomed to the usual back-to-school swirl of new supplies, new clothes and new routines. But this year, that final flurry of summer is accompanied by an unusual worry.

Moore-Davis does not yet know how her children will get to school.

Last month, the financially pressed Houston-area school district her two daughters attend decided to end bus service for students living within two miles of schools. Now Moore-Davis is contemplating the bustling intersections and streets without sidewalks the girls would have to navigate if they walked to school, and wondering whether her own work schedule can be reconfigured for drop-offs and pickups.

It is a dilemma facing thousands of parents across the country, as cash-strapped school districts from California to Florida have cut bus routes to chip away at spending.

"I'm still trying to figure out how I will do this," said Moore-Davis, who has one daughter entering middle school and another entering high school. "My youngest is very concerned about who's going to pick her up. She keeps asking me about it."

About 23 percent of school districts surveyed by the American Association of School Administrators say they are reducing or eliminating school transportation for the coming school year as part of cost-cutting measures. That's up from the 14 percent who considered such measures during the 2008-2009 year.

"I've seen it happening in Massachusetts, in Ohio, in Indiana. A lot of school



Buses are parked in a row at a Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District transportation center Friday, Aug. 7, 2009 in Houston. In a cost-saving measure, the school district will stop busing students who live within two miles of their school this year.

Associated Press

districts are looking at in varying degrees," said Robin Leeds, industry specialist with the National School Transportation Association.

Parents and transportation advocates say the proposed cuts will have wide-ranging repercussions — affecting everything from parents' work schedules to student attendance. Many also worry that the cuts will jeopardize the safety of students who may have to cross busy highways or dangerous roads to get to class.

Deadly school bus crashes are rare, while past studies have shown riding to school in a car, walking and bicycling account for hundreds of student deaths a year.

For their part, school districts say trimming student transportation is a painful but necessary way of coping with reductions in state funding and a drop in property tax revenue.

Most states reimburse only a portion of bus service costs, saddling local districts with the bulk of the expense of transporting students. In addition, most states do not reimburse the costs of

transporting students who live within a specified distance from school.

In Brockton, Mass., near Boston, the school district expects to save \$500,000 by taking 10 school buses off the road in September, adding to the 20 already cut last year.

In Cobb County, Ga., a district facing a \$58 million deficit, the school board recently voted to consolidate bus routes by eliminating 8,500 stops — about 15 percent of the total in the district. The school district revised plans to eliminate 11,000 bus stops and changed stops to avoid busy streets after dozens of angry parents showed up at a school board meeting.

School districts throughout California are grappling with severe cuts in state funding, including a 20 percent cut in funding for school transportation in the new state budget. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger had lobbied for a 65 percent reduction, but relented after a chorus of protests.

After losing about \$9 million in state funding, the state's Novato Unified School District decided to eliminate all bus service

except for special education students. The move will affect about 600 of the district's 8,000 students.

"We were trying to avoid hitting classrooms," said Marla Blackledge, Novato's chief financial officer.

Even before the drop in funding, state money covered less than half the costs of school bus service, Blackledge said.

"This was just the last straw," she said. "But we do have concerns for working parents, how their kids will get to school, how they will get to day care, about parents living in poverty who don't have a car to drive kids to school. We're concerned about whether the kids will come to school at all."

In Texas, the state reimburses districts

according to a formula set in 1983. Last year, the Cypress-Fairbanks school district, which Moore-Davis' two daughters attend, spent \$32 million for student transportation services, but only got \$6.4 million in reimbursement.

Texas also does not reimburse the cost of transporting students who live within two miles of school.

In the past, the district absorbed the extra costs, but this year, the district is confronting a \$14 million budget deficit and no longer can do that, Superintendent David Anthony said in a letter to parents.

In addition to cutting service within the two-mile limit, the district will no longer offer "late" bus services for students who stay after school for extracurricular activities. About 16,000 of the district's 104,000 students will be affected by the changes.

Moore-Davis' job as vice president for student learning at a local community college gives her more flexibility than most working parents, but she says many of her neighbors are not so lucky.

"A lot of people are experiencing economic hardship. There are families that need to have two jobs and can't just stop in the middle of day to pick up children," Moore-Davis said. "And they're concerned about the security of their children" □



Young Obama backers missing from health care fight

BETH FOUHY

Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Add this to President Barack Obama's problems in selling his health care overhaul: A lot of the tech-savvy activists who helped put him in office are young, feeling indestructible and not all that into what they see as an old folks issue.

It's a crucial gap in support and one the White House may have to correct if Obama is to regain the momentum and get Congress to act on his top domestic priority.

The United States is the only developed nation that does not have a comprehensive national health care plan for all its citizens, leaving about 50 million of America's 300 million people are without health insurance.

Matt Singer, a 26-year-old founder of the liberal group Forward Montana and an activist in the health care trenches, has tried to engage young people.

"Right now we're seeing a big conversation with seniors, but you're not seeing the same mobilization among young people who are President Obama's core constituency," Singer said. "The age demographic most supportive of reform has not been engaged, and it makes me very nervous."

Younger people are generally healthier and rely on less medical care, particularly young working men who make up the largest group that goes voluntarily without health insurance. They also are less likely to be as vocal at contentious town halls; many are either working or in school during the daytime forums.

Among senior citizens, the fear is palpable about Obama's efforts, reflected in public polling that shows support falling for his proposals. Seniors worry that paying for the \$1 trillion-plus, 10-year overhaul will mean cuts in benefits from the government's Medicare insurance program for the elderly.

Talk of death panels and "pulling the plug on grandma," although discredited, has scared seniors. Sensing



President Barack Obama speaks during the Organizing for America National Health Care Forum at the Democratic National Committee headquarters in Washington Thursday, Aug. 20, 2009.

Associated Press

opportunity, the Republican National Committee announced a "Seniors' Health Care Bill of Rights" Monday that pledges to protect the elderly from any attempt to ration health care because of age.

Seniors preferred Republican Sen. John McCain by a 55-43 percent margin in last year's general election — the only age group Obama lost.

Determined to energize his

activist base, Obama talked up health care in an online town meeting last week with Organizing for America, the campaign operation reconstituted as the White House political arm. The operation has stepped up its push on health care, hosting thousands of events across every state and congressional district. "It's great to be here with all of you because it reminds me of how we got

here in the first place," Obama told the group in the meeting. In an interview with radio talk show host Michael Smerconish, he also promoted his proposal for young people up to the age of 26 to get health coverage under their parents' insurance plans. "It gives them a way of having coverage until they get that job that has a little bit more security," he said.

Said Celinda Lake, a

Democratic pollster who has researched the youth vote: "I think the White House thought they could mobilize their younger supporters just by saying, 'Come out.' But now they realize they have to run a real campaign."

The question is whether it's too late in the game for the 18-to-29-year-old voters who turned out in unprecedented numbers for Obama in 2008, giving him 66 percent of their vote to 32 percent for Republican McCain. Polling shows that younger voters are the most supportive of health care reform — but also the most likely to be uninsured.

Heather Smith, executive director of the youth-oriented group Rock the Vote, said that the heated arguments that have dominated the debate recently — from the future of Medicare to "death panels" to claims of rationing — have seemed far removed from the lives of young people, whose health-insurance worries primarily center on the cost and availability of coverage.

"What we've learned by working with this generation through polling is that attacks, rather than dialogue, doesn't attract them," Smith said. "Beyond the screaming, there's a tremendous amount of interest and concern among young people. It's just not something you see."

But critics also point to a failure of Obama's message, saying that by focusing so intently on the concerns of senior citizens the White House may have lost the attention of younger voters. They argue that the tools Obama used so successfully to mobilize young voters in the campaign, such as community organizing and social networking, need to be reintroduced and used more aggressively in this debate.

"If we're going to keep this generation engaged, we have to move away from the politics of partisan talking points and move back to what was done last year: the politics of engagement, citizenship, democracy, online and on the ground activity, and conversations with peers," Smith said. □

Gov't extends deadline for clunkers paperwork

By KEN THOMAS and STEPHEN MANNING

Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON — The Transportation Department is assuring auto dealers they will get time to submit their pending Cash for Clunkers deals, as continued problems with the government's Web site make it difficult for dealers to file for repayment under the popular \$3 billion government rebate program.

All sales under the program ended Monday evening.

The deadline for paperwork to be submitted was pushed back to noon Tuesday from an earlier 8 p.m. EDT Monday cutoff after government computers set up to handle the filings buckled under a flood of dealers trying to send in their sales agreements at the last minute. Under the original plan, those deals that weren't submitted on time wouldn't be repaid, leaving many dealers fearful that they would be left on the hook for clunker sales they made.

However, it now appears that the deadline could be pushed back again.

"We continue to address technical problems with the CARS website, and have determined

that the website will not be fully functional before (Tuesday) morning," the Transportation Department said in a statement sent to dealers late Monday evening. "Dealers should be assured that they will be provided time to submit pending deals equivalent to the time that was lost this afternoon while the system was down."

The DOT declined to elaborate further.

"The computer system has been down or very slow for most of this day, and we literally have thousands of dealers with probably millions of dollars of deals that they would like to submit and just have been unable to," said Michael Harrington, chief legislative counsel for the National Automobile Dealers Association, earlier Monday.

Computer problems have plagued the program, as it proved far more popular than government officials expected. A rush of filings also bombarded the online system earlier this month when it appeared the first \$1 billion Congress set aside would run out just days after sales began. Transportation officials later expanded its computer network capacity and tripled the number of staffers working on the program. □

JACKSON'S DEATH
Continued from Page B1

According to the document, Murray said he'd been treating Jackson for insomnia for about six weeks with 50 mg of propofol every night via an intravenous drip. But he said he feared Jackson was forming an addiction to the anesthetic, which is normally used in hospitals only, and was attempting to wean his patient by lowering the dose to 25 mg and adding the sedatives lorazepam and midazolam. That combination succeeded in helping Jackson sleep two days prior to his death, so the next day, Murray told detectives he cut off the propofol — and Jackson fell asleep with just the two sedatives.

Then around 1:30 a.m. on June 25, starting with a 10-milligram tab of Valium, Murray said he tried a series of drugs instead of propofol to make Jackson sleep. The injections included two milligrams of lorazepam around 2 a.m., two milligrams of midazolam around 3 a.m., and repeats of each at 5 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. respectively. But they didn't work.

Murray told detectives that around 10:40 a.m. he gave in to Jackson's "repeated demands/requests" for propofol, which the singer referred to as his "milk." He administered 25 milligrams of the white-colored liquid, — a relatively small dose — and finally, Jackson fell asleep. Murray remained with the sedated Jackson for about 10 minutes, then left for the bathroom. No more than two

minutes later, he returned — and found Jackson had stopped breathing. "There's no surprise there" that death could result from such a combination, said Dr. David Zvara, anesthesia chairman at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "All those drugs act in synergy with each other," Zvara said. Adding propofol on top of all the other sedatives "tipped the balance."

Besides the propofol and two sedatives, the coroner's toxicology report found other substances in Jackson's system but they were not believed to have been a factor in the singer's death, the official told the AP.

When he died, Jackson was skinny but not overly emaciated, and his body had bed sores, the official said. The singer is believed to have developed bed sores in the months following his 2005 acquittal of child molestation charges, when he went into seclusion and spent long stretches in bed.

Murray has spoken to police and last week released a video saying he "told the truth and I have faith the truth will prevail." Murray did not say anything about the drugs he gave to Jackson. Murray's attorney, Edward Chernoff, had no immediate comment but has previously said Murray never administered anything that "should have" killed Jackson.

A call to the coroner's office was not returned Monday. The 25 milligrams of propofol

Murray told police he gave Jackson the day he died "is not a whopping amount," said Lee Cantrell, director of the San Diego division of the California Poison Control System. But by combining propofol with a cocktail of the other sedatives, known as benzodiazepines, it "may have been the trigger that pushed him over the edge," Cantrell said.

Cantrell said it's perplexing that someone would give various benzodiazepines if one was found not to be effective. "This is horrible polypharmacy," he said, referring to the interaction between the various drugs. "No one will treat an insomniac like this."

The affidavit says Murray told investigators he didn't order or buy any propofol and had found about eight bottles of it in Jackson's home along with numerous other medications. But investigators served a search warrant Aug. 11 at a Las Vegas pharmacy and uncovered evidence showing Murray legally purchased from the store the propofol he gave Jackson the day he died. Murray didn't tell paramedics or doctors at UCLA hospital where Jackson was rushed June 25 about any drugs he administered other than lorazepam and flumazenil, according to the affidavit. The document says it was only during a subsequent interview with Los Angeles Police detectives that Murray gave a more full accounting of the events leading up to the



In this July 7, 2006 file photo, Dr. Conrad Murray poses for a photo in Houston. A law enforcement official tells The Associated Press on Monday, Aug. 24, 2009, that the Los Angeles County coroner has ruled Michael Jackson's death a homicide. Murray, Jackson's personal physician, is the target of a manslaughter probe headed by Los Angeles police.

emergency call.

The coroner's office has not publicly released its autopsy findings, citing a request from police detectives to withhold results until their investigation is complete.

Homicide, or "death at the hands of another," is one of five possible findings in a coroner's death investigation. The designation does not necessarily mean a crime was

committed though it is a useful starting point for prosecutors, said Dr. Michael Baden, the former chief medical examiner in New York City and a forensics expert involved in many high-profile murder cases.

"It is an easier prosecution when the medical examiner calls it a homicide," said Baden, who is not involved in the Jackson investigation. □

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In this image made from television Abdel Baset al-Megrahi, right, who was found guilty of the 1988 Lockerbie bombing, is greeted by Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, in Tripoli, Libya on Friday, Aug. 21, 2009. The release of al-Megrahi, the only man convicted of blowing up a Pan Am flight in 1988 has brought high drama and controversy: the jeering mob outside a Scottish prison, the cheering crowd at a Tripoli airport, the furious families of the 270 people who died in the Lockerbie bombing.

Associated Press

BOMBER'S RELEASE

Continued from Page B1

The Scottish administration has faced unrelenting criticism from the both the U.S. government and the families of American victims of the 1988 airline bombing since it announced last week it was freeing Abdel Baset al-Megrahi on compassionate grounds. The terminally ill al-Megrahi, who has prostate cancer, returned to his native Libya on Thursday, where he was greeted by crowds waving Libyan and Scottish flags.

The United States will stand by Britain, even though it believes the decision was a mistake, State Department spokesman Ian Kelly told reporters Monday.

“We made it quite clear that we disagreed passionately with this decision, because we thought it sent the wrong signal to, not only the families, but also to terrorists, But I really discourage you from thinking that we necessarily have to have some kind of tit-for-tat retaliation because of it. I just don’t see it — not with Britain. Not with Scotland either,” Kelly said.

Kelly’s words follow days of criticism from top U.S. officials.

Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill doggedly defended the decision Monday, but said Libya had broken a promise by giving the convicted terrorist a hero’s welcome. Scottish lawmakers came back from summer vacation a week early for an emotional debate on the issue.

Britain, meanwhile, scrapped a trade visit to Libya by Prince Andrew amid controversy over the release.

MacAskill said the warm homecoming for al-Megrahi breached assurances from Libyan authorities that “any return would be dealt with in a low-key and sensitive fashion.”

“It is a matter of great regret that Mr. (al-) Megrahi was received in such an inappropriate manner,” MacAskill told the Scottish parliament. “It showed no compassion or sensitivity to the families of the 270 victims of Lockerbie.”

A member of the Libyan government’s negotiating team who took part in the talks

about al-Megrahi’s release told The Associated Press that the Libyan government had not organized al-Megrahi’s reception and had not broken any agreement with Scotland. The official did not want to be identified due to the sensitivity of the issue.

He said no government official met al-Megrahi at the airport and pointed out that Gadhafi’s son, Seif al-Islam Gadhafi, who traveled with al-Megrahi on the plane, is not a government official.

The official said the crowd that threw rose petals and cheered al-Megrahi at the airport heard of his return through the media and spontaneously chose to greet him, he said.

By Libyan standards, al-Megrahi’s welcome was relatively muted. Hundreds of people waiting in the crowd for his plane were rushed away by authorities at the last minute, and the arrival was not aired live on state TV.

Back in Scotland, MacAskill said his decision to free al Megrahi “was not based on political, economic or diplomatic considerations.”

“This was my decision and my decision alone,” he said. “I stand by it and I live with the consequences.”

The decision has prompted calls for a trade boycott of Scotland and widespread criticism of the nationalist government in Edinburgh. Scottish people were ashamed “to see our flag flying to welcome a convicted bomber home,” Labour legislator Iain Gray told the parliament.

In a strongly worded letter to the Scottish government, FBI director Robert Mueller said al-Megrahi’s release gave comfort to terrorists, while Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, said releasing the bomber was “obviously a political decision.”

The explosion of a bomb hidden in the cargo hold of Pan Am Flight 103 over the Scottish town of Lockerbie killed all 259 people on the plane — most of them American — and 11 people on the ground. Al-Megrahi, a former Libyan intelligence agent, is the only person convicted of the bombing.

Compassionate release is a regular feature of the Scottish

system when a prisoner is near death. Of the 31 applications over the last decade, 24 prisoners have been freed on compassionate grounds in Scotland, including al-Megrahi. Another seven applications were turned down because the medical evidence did not support the claim.

Top British cancer specialists say al-Megrahi has less than three months to live.

Scotland is part of Britain but has its own parliament — established in 1999 — with power over large areas of policy, including justice, health and education. The British Parliament in London retains primacy on all matters relating to Britain as a whole, such as defense, energy and foreign relations.

Scotland’s nationalist administration has vowed to hold a referendum on full independence from Britain. Some lawmakers have called for MacAskill to resign over his decision. No vote was taken during Monday’s 75-minute session, but some Scottish politicians say they will seek a confidence vote when the parliament begins its fall session next week — one that could potentially bring down the minority government.

The British government has fiercely refuted claims that al-Megrahi’s release was intended to boost business ties between Britain and Libya, which has vast oil reserves. Such suspicions were heightened after Libyan President Moammar Gadhafi thanked Brown and Queen Elizabeth II by name for “encouraging” the Scottish government to free al-Megrahi.

Business Secretary Peter Mandelson said the suggestion there had been a deal was “completely implausible and actually quite offensive.”

Kelly said the U.S. was not aware that any commercial interests between Britain and Libya played a role in the decision to release al-Megrahi.

“You have multiple senior British officials who have denied this. And I will take what they said on face value,” Kelly said.

He warned that the U.S. relationship with Libya now depended in part on how Libya handles the situation. □

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AT RENAISSANCE - ORANJESTAD

PG-13	THE TIME TRAVELER'S WIFE	daily: 5:30 7:45 10:00	matinee: 12:50 3:15 late show: 12:30	NEW
R	THE HANGOVER	daily: 7:30 9:45	matinee: late show: 12:00	
PG	ALIENS IN THE ATTIC	daily: 5:15 12:45 3:00	matinee: late show:	
PG-13	G.I. JOE: THE RISE OF THE COBRA	daily: 5:45 8:30 12:30 3:15	matinee: late show: 11:15	
R	THE ORPHAN	daily: 6:15 8:45 12:45 3:30	matinee: late show: 11:30	
PG	SHORTS	daily: 4:15 6:15 8:15 10:15	matinee: 12:15 2:15 late show: 12:15	
PG	ICE AGE 3 DAWN OF THE DINOSAURS	daily: 4:00 6:00 12:00 2:00	matinee: late show:	
PG-13	TRANSFORMER 2	daily: 8:00	matinee: late show: 11:00	

AT PASEO HERENCIA

PG-13	DISTRICT 9	daily: 5:15 7:45 10:15	matinee: 12:30 3:00 late show: 12:30	
R	THE UGLY TRUTH	daily: 4:45 7:00 9:15	matinee: 12:15 2:30 late show: 11:30	
PG-13	THE PROPOSAL	daily: 9:30	matinee: late show: 12:15	
PG	HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE	daily: 5:45 2:15	matinee: late show:	
R	THE HANGOVER	daily: 7:30 9:45	matinee: late show: 11:15	
PG-13	JULIE AND JULIA	daily: 4:45 2:00	matinee: late show:	
R	FUNNY PEOPLE	daily: 9:00	matinee: late show: 12:00	
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U.S., S. Korea to keep enforcing sanctions on N. Korea

JAE-SOON CHANG

Associated Press Writer

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea and the United States are showing no immediate signs of easing pressure on North Korea despite a series of overtures by the communist nation, including a reported offer of summit talks with the rival South.

North Korea, which had been stoking tensions with nuclear and missile tests, has been markedly conciliatory toward the U.S. and South Korea since freeing two American journalists following a trip to Pyongyang by former President Bill Clinton earlier this month.

It has since freed a South Korean worker it held for more than four months, agreed to lift restrictions on border crossings with the South, and pledged to resume suspended joint inter-Korean projects and reunions of families separated during the Korean War over five decades ago.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Il also sent a delegation to Seoul to mourn late former South Korean President Kim Dae-jung. It was the first time North Korean officials have visited the South since ties frayed badly after conservative President Lee Myung-bak took office in Seoul last year.

The delegation met Lee on Sunday.

South Korean newspapers reported Monday that Kim Jong Il sent word via the delegation that he wants to hold a summit with Lee — a significant about-face by a nation that has heaped harsh criticism on the conservative, pro-American former businessman for his hard-line stance toward Pyongyang. Lee's office quickly denied the reports, saying the president and North Korean envoys held general discussions on improving relations between the two sides during a meeting Sunday, but nothing related to a summit was discussed.

Despite the series of overtures from Pyongyang, Seoul and Washington

remained firm that they need to see North Korea taking concrete steps on ending its nuclear programs before they consider softening their stance on a nation known for backtracking on agreements. North Korea has long balanced stoking tensions with conciliatory overtures to extract concessions and head off sanctions.

Yoo Ho-yeol, a professor of North Korean studies at Korea University, said Pyongyang's gestures alone will not be enough to change South Korea's basic policy.

"What North Korea wants is full-fledged economic aid (from the South)," Yoo said. "But I think that would be possible only when it unveils key steps for denuclearization."

After a long impasse in the nuclear standoff, Pyongyang carried out its first-ever nuclear test in 2006. The bold move resulted in a U.N. sanctions resolution, but the North got away unscathed by agreeing to return to the negotiating table.

Subsequent talks made some progress, but stalled again later and led to Pyongyang's second nuclear test in May. South Korea and the U.S. have repeatedly said they won't repeat the same mistake again.

Seoul's Foreign Ministry spokesman Moon Tae-young said Monday that South Korea and the U.S. are in agreement that they won't change their stance on North Korea and will keep implementing sanctions unless there is a "fundamental change" in Pyongyang's attitude about denuclearization.

"We are sticking to our existing position that we will continue faithfully carrying out U.N. resolutions while urging North Korea to return to six-party talks" on its nuclear programs, Moon said of the outcome of talks over the weekend between U.S. special envoy Stephen Bosworth and South Korean officials. The suspended six-party talks included the two Koreas, the U.S., China, Russia and Japan.

Bosworth was in Seoul to attend Kim Dae-jung's funeral.

Despite easing tensions, North Korea is still holding and investigating four South Korean fishermen seized late last month after their boat strayed into North Korean waters off the peninsula's east coast.

And North Korea's top military officer threatened Monday to retaliate against sanctions in a diatribe deploying the country's trademark rhetoric.

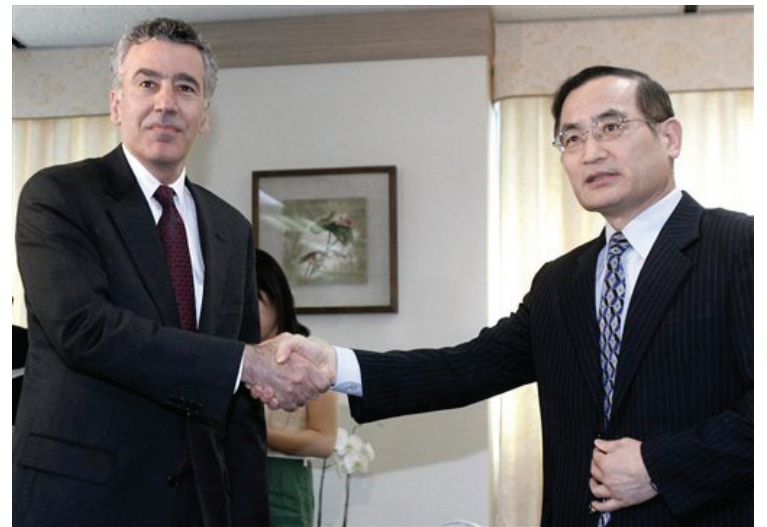
"The unchanged position of our military and people is that we respond to sanctions with merciless retaliation and confrontation with full-fledged confrontation," Ri Yong Ho, chief of the military's general staff, said in a speech shown on North Korean state television.

Washington, for its part, has been keeping up pressure on Pyongyang to dismantle its nuclear programs, sending a senior official to Asia to seek support for stringent implementation of the U.N. sanctions meant to punish the North for its May 25 nuclear test.

The sanctions approved by the U.N. Security Council in June banned member states from selling or supplying arms and weapons-related material to North Korea except for small arms and light weapons, and authorized member states to inspect North Korean vessels suspected of carrying banned weapons or materials.

On Monday, envoy Philip Goldberg met in Seoul with the South's chief nuclear negotiator and said a complete, verifiable denuclearization of North Korea is "certainly our goal," and the U.N. sanctions resolution "very much lays that out."

He told reporters the overall goal is "to bring about a return to denuclearization and end to those missile programs that are violations not just of the U.N. resolutions but also of the previous commitments made by North Korea" during international disarmament talks. □



Philip Goldberg, a senior U.S. diplomat in charge of coordinating the implementation of sanction against North Korea, left, shakes hands with Wi Sung-lac, South Korea's top nuclear envoy during their meeting at the Foreign Ministry in Seoul, South Korea, Monday, Aug. 24, 2009. Goldberg sought South Korea's support Monday for enforcing U.N. sanctions against North Korea, as the communist nation has made a series of gestures of reducing tensions with the rival South.

Associated Press

Argentine police discover 4 tons of ephedrine

DEBORA REY

Associated Press Writer

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Federal police on Monday uncovered four tons of ephedrine in oil drums and boxes to be sent to Mexico and the United States. The lead investigator called it the largest illegal shipment of the methamphetamine precursor ever seized in Argentina, worth millions. The ephedrine, was imported from India and China, and discovered with the help of U.S. Drug Enforcement and Interpol agents who have advised police investigating a group of Argentines and Mexican traffickers, Commissioner Miguel Castro told The Associated Press.

Castro, superintendent of investigations for the federal police, said the boxes were hidden in a furniture warehouse and the drums were found in another warehouse where one employee was arrested.

The chemical is worth \$4,000 to \$6,000 a kilogram on the street in Argentina, but the traffickers planned to ship it to Mexico, where it sells for between \$10,000 and \$15,000 a kilogram to gangs that make methamphetamine for U.S. consumers, Castro said.

Investigators suspect the chemical remained hidden since last year following the execution-style killings of three Argentines, allegedly by Mexican hit men, in August 2008. Two of the victims owned pharmacies that imported large quantities of the chemical for use in cold medicines, but allegedly intended to sell it instead to gangs from Mexico, which banned the substance in 2007.

Forced to acknowledge how Argentina's wide-open ephedrine market was attracting Mexican cartels, the government ordered drugmakers at the end of 2008 to obtain prior approval before importing the chemical.

Monday's discovery is the second this month. Another four tons of properly declared ephedrine was discovered abandoned in a customs service depository in the port of Buenos Aires. Castro said the two discoveries are unrelated, and that police are still trying to determine if that ephedrine is legal. All eight tons will remain under a judge's supervision while cases are pending, and then be destroyed, Castro said. □

Delegation seeks Zelaya's return in Honduras visit

JUAN CARLOS LLORCA

Associated Press Writer

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) — Foreign ministers from seven nations launched a direct, high-profile attempt Monday to persuade Honduras' interim government to restore ousted President Manuel Zelaya. The delegation from the Organization of American States was the most prominent group of officials to visit Honduras since Zelaya was arrested and hustled out of the country June 28, prompting criticism from governments around the world.

"We hope to meet with the interim government and other sectors (of Honduran society) who are able to support all the points in the San Jose accord, including the reinstatement of President Zelaya," Costa Rican Foreign Minister Bruno Stagno told reporters.

The foreign ministers — from Argentina, Canada, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama and the Dominican Republic — met with Zelaya

supporters in the morning and they "showed they would support the accord," Stagno said.

OAS Secretary-General Jose Miguel Insulza accompanied the group.

The OAS is pressuring the interim government to accept the San Jose accord, a plan proposed by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias that would return Zelaya to power until elections are held by the end of November and would grant amnesty both to Zelaya for any alleged crimes and to those involved in the coup.

The U.S. State Department backed the OAS effort to push Arias' proposal.

"We believe that it's imperative that all parties involved support this accord and move forward to resolve this political crisis," spokesman Ian Kelly said in Washington. "We continue to believe that the Honduran people deserve a peaceful negotiated agreement to which all parties can commit and that this accord presents the best

opportunity for this kind of agreement."

Xiomara Castro, Zelaya's wife, said her husband has accepted all of the plan's 12 points, including abandoning efforts to change the Honduran constitution, the move that prompted the coup.

The government headed by interim President Roberto Micheletti has repeatedly refused the Arias plan, arguing it would trample on rulings by the country's Supreme Court and Congress.

"No one can come to impose anything on our country because we're sovereign and have our own laws," Micheletti said Monday. Micheletti, who has withstood weeks of diplomatic isolation and the suspension of international aid, insists Congress legitimately removed Zelaya from office for ignoring court orders to drop efforts to change the Honduran constitution.

"We hope the foreign ministers understand that what we did was based on legality and the



The Secretary General of the Organization of American States, OAS, Jose Miguel Insulza, center, arrives at a hotel in Tegucigalpa, Monday, Aug. 24, 2009. Insulza and a delegation of foreign ministers arrived in Tegucigalpa to push for the reinstatement of ousted President Manuel Zelaya.

constitution," he said.

Honduran Foreign Minister Carlos Lopez rejected the possibility of granting amnesty to Zelaya in a letter published Monday in Honduran newspapers.

"To impose a president legally removed from the presidency, it's an option that the Honduran Constitution does not allow," Lopez wrote.

Associated Press

Many Hondurans saw Zelaya's attempt to hold a referendum asking voters if they wanted a constitutional assembly as a backdoor way of erasing the ban on re-election and heading toward socialist rule like that of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Zelaya, whose term expires in January, denies plotting to remove term limits or the ban on re-election. □




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Israel's Netanyahu brings balancing act to Europe

MATTI FRIEDMAN

Associated Press Writer

LONDON (AP) — Benjamin Netanyahu's talks in Europe this week will force the Israeli leader to balance the demands of his right-leaning ruling coalition against an international front opposed to Israeli settlements.

Though Netanyahu says his talks in London and Berlin will touch on other subjects, such as Iran's nuclear program, he is likely to hear concerns about settlements from all three of the key people he is slated to meet: British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, German

Chancellor Angela Merkel and the representative of Israel's closest ally, U.S. Mideast envoy George Mitchell.

Netanyahu began his 4-day European visit in London late Monday afternoon, and held a meeting with British newspaper editors Monday evening before his scheduled meeting with Brown on Tuesday. He will meet Mitchell in London on Wednesday before heading to Berlin. He is due to return to Israel Thursday.

Ignoring the wishes of the broader international community will demand a diplomatic cost Israel can

ill afford to pay, and both Israel and the U.S. signaled Monday that they have made progress on a compromise on settlements.

But at home, Netanyahu's partners in an unruly governing coalition are pulling him in the opposite direction and are suspicious of any sign of compromise. Crossing them could unravel his hold on power.

In recent weeks, some of Netanyahu's allies have done their best to nudge him rightward. A group of Cabinet ministers paid a supportive visit to an unauthorized settlement



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu chairs the weekly cabinet meeting in his Jerusalem office, Sunday, Aug. 23, 2009. Netanyahu has joined Israeli calls for the Swedish government to condemn an article in a Stockholm newspaper suggesting Israeli troops harvested the organs of Palestinians they killed.

Associated Press

outpost in the West Bank — even though Netanyahu has promised to remove such wildcat settlements — and called on the prime minister to ignore President Barack Obama's call to stop building homes for Jews on land the Palestinians want for an independent country.

Netanyahu spokesman Nir Hefetz said there was no expectation that the settlement issue would be resolved at Wednesday's meeting with Mitchell, perhaps the most important of Netanyahu's meetings this week. But Hefetz told reporters traveling with the prime minister that there was likely to be "certain progress."

That was echoed Monday in Washington, D.C., by State Department spokesman Ian Kelly, who said the sides were "getting closer" to a deal.

"I don't want to go into the details of exactly why, but just to say that we are — we're hopeful that we can resume very soon," Kelly said, referring to the suspended Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

The Palestinians say they will not resume talks before the Israelis freeze settlement construction. Hefetz said Israel's government believed talks could be resumed within two months.

Israeli government officials say a compromise being discussed could see Israel freeze building except for 2,500 units currently under construction. They spoke on condition of anonymity because details of the talks between Israel and the U.S. are secret.

The number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank — home to some 2.5 million Palestinians — has more than doubled since the mid-1990s and now stands at around 300,000.

Netanyahu has shown some willingness to compromise since taking office in March, after winning an election on a hard-line platform.

He endorsed the formation of a Palestinian state, a major reversal after years of opposing the idea, albeit with several conditions. And last week, Netanyahu's housing minister said Israel had temporarily stopped approving new building projects in the West Bank.

Obama said after that announcement that he was "encouraged by some of the things I am seeing on the ground," an indication, perhaps, that the sides are getting close to a compromise.

But the halt in approvals for new building was seen by Netanyahu's critics as little more than a maneuver. The settlement watchdog group Peace Now said Sunday that there had been no real slowdown in construction and that settlers could keep building indefinitely, using plans that have already been approved.

Netanyahu has also taken steps to improve life for Palestinians in the West Bank. With the territory enjoying a period of calm, some Israeli military checkpoints have been lifted, permits for importing raw materials are being granted, and there are other signs that life there is assuming a semblance of normalcy. □

Athens fires recede but officials still wary

NICHOLAS PAPHITIS

Associated Press Writer

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — A massive wildfire that destroyed homes and forests receded as a multinational airborne effort beat back flames that at one point threatened Athens' northern suburbs and raged near the ancient battleground at Marathon.

As winds died down late Monday, Greek Fire Brigade spokesman Yiannis Kappakis said there were "no significant active fronts" left of the fire, which for days has sent a pall of smoke over the capital, plunging parts of it into a brown half-light.

Kappakis said more than 1,000 firefighters and soldiers would remain on duty in case the blazes revived.

"The danger of the fires flaring up again is not yet over," he said. Since Saturday the fire has razed some 21,000 hectares (51,890 acres) of pine forest, olive grove, brush and farmland, according to the European Commission's European Forest Fire Information System. Greek officials say 150 homes were damaged.

Experts warned it would take generations to replace the lost forests, many of which were burnt beyond the hope of natural regrowth.

Thousands of people were forced to flee their homes, and elderly nuns were evacuated from the threatened convent of Saint Ephrem near the coastal



Volunteers from the Red Cross work at the scene of a forest fire in Pikermi, north of Athens, Monday, Aug. 24, 2009. The convent was evacuated Monday. Wind-driven fires raged for a fourth day outside the capital, prompting several European countries to send planes and other assistance.

Associated Press

town of Nea Makri — carrying the saint's relics with them.

"The flames were 30 meters (100 feet) high," said one of the nuns evacuated, wearing a black habit and a surgical mask to ward off the smoke and grit. "Thankfully they came and rescued us."

At least five people were treated for burns and several dozen reported breathing problems, but no injuries were serious, the Health Ministry said.

Other major fires still burned near the coastal town of Porto Germeno, northwest of Athens, and near villages on the Evia island, east of the capital.

Nineteen water-dropping planes and helicopters — including aircraft from Italy, France and Cyprus — unleashed some 14,000 tons of water on Monday

that helped contain the biggest blaze near Athens.

The European Commission said in a statement it was the biggest coordinated emergency operation this year.

Before the blaze was contained, flames tore down a hillside toward houses near coastal Nea Makri, where volunteers with water-soaked towels wrapped around their necks beat back the flames with tree branches.

Fires also threatened the ancient fortress town of Rhamnus, home to two 2,500-year-old temples. Officials have not said what started the fires. Hundreds of forest blazes plague Greece every summer and some are set intentionally — often by the unscrupulous land developers or animal farmers seeking to expand their grazing land. □

Opositor acusa Gobierno Colombia de compra votos para reelección

BOGOTA (Reuters) - Un líder del opositor Partido Liberal acusó el lunes al Gobierno del presidente colombiano, Alvaro Uribe, de comprar congresistas para que voten a favor de un referendo que busca habilitar al popular mandatario para competir por una segunda reelección inmediata.

La denuncia, negada por el Gobierno, fue hecha a escasas horas de que la Cámara de Representantes vote la conciliación de un texto del proyecto de referendo que permitiría a Uribe ser candidato en el 2010 y buscar su tercer periodo consecutivo de Gobierno.

La acusación rememoró el caso de dos ex congresistas que fueron condenados hace meses por la Corte Suprema de Justicia por haber recibido prebendas del Gobierno para que votaran a favor de una reforma constitucional que permitió la primera reelección de Uribe en el 2006.

“Lo de Teodolindo (Avendaño) y Yidis Medina se va a quedar en pañales.

La negociación de notarías a cambio de la primera reelección del presidente Uribe la conocimos tres años

después. Hoy el país ve, en vivo y en directo, antes de la votación, las ilegalidades en el trámite del referendo”, afirmó el precandidato presidencial del Partido Liberal Rafael Pardo.

Aunque no dio pruebas ni mayores precisiones de las acusaciones, Pardo aseguró que el Gobierno desvió recursos por unos 110 millones de dólares que estaban destinados a la seguridad y fueron realmente dispuestos para la reconstrucción de 52 sedes de alcaldías en diferentes zonas del país.

El ministro de Hacienda, Oscar Iván Zuluaga, negó el lunes el desvío de recursos del presupuesto para comprometer a congresistas con el referendo reeleccionista.

Avendaño y Medina son los dos ex congresistas condenados por recibir favores del Gobierno a cambio de votar la reforma que permitió la primera reelección de Uribe. En esta ocasión, Pardo no dio nombres de los legisladores supuestamente implicados.

El Senado aprobó la semana pasada el texto definitivo de un referendo para consultar a los votantes si aprueban

cambiar la Constitución para permitir a Uribe a aspirar a un tercer mandato.

Pero la aprobación en la Cámara de Representantes será más reñida y complicada después de que algunos legisladores salieron de la coalición del Gobierno y por el temor de que la Corte Constitucional los investigue por posibles irregularidades en el trámite inicial del referendo.

Si la cámara rechaza el proyecto de referendo, el popular mandatario quedaría inhabilitado para ser candidato en el 2010, situación que de acuerdo con analistas despejaría la carrera por la presidencia.

Pero si lo aprueba, deberá enfrentar un examen de legalidad en la Corte Constitucional, donde podría hundirse y, en caso de recibir el sí en esta instancia, deberá ser votado en las urnas por más de siete millones de electores. □



El presidente de Colombia, Alvaro Uribe, habla en una conferencia de prensa en Asunción, 5 ago 2009. Un líder del opositor Partido Liberal acusó el lunes al Gobierno del presidente colombiano, Alvaro Uribe, de comprar congresistas para que voten a favor de un referendo que busca habilitar al popular mandatario para competir por una segunda reelección inmediata. REUTERS/Jorge Adorno

Perú respetará acuerdo entre Colombia y EEUU

LIMA (AP) - Perú expresará en la próxima reunión extraordinaria de la UNASUR el “respeto a la soberanía” de Colombia, la cual le permite autorizar el uso de siete bases militares colombianas por parte de tropas estadounidenses, afirmó el canciller peruano.

“La posición del Perú en UNASUR primero que nada será de respeto a la soberanía que tiene derecho a ejercer Colombia sobre sus propios territorios”, dijo el canciller José García Belaunde en declaraciones citadas el domingo por la agencia oficial de noticias Andina.

Sin embargo, el jefe de la diplomacia peruana señaló la importancia de que los miembros de la Unión de Naciones Suramericanas encuentren la forma en que se conjuguen los intereses colombianos con la preocupación del resto de países sobre el mencionado acuerdo. “Tenemos que encontrar un espacio donde, por un lado, se conjuguen los intereses de Colombia, que viene luchando por erradicar el narcotráfico y, por otro lado, la preocupación legítima que puedan tener países de la región sobre un acuerdo que implique el uso de bases militares”, precisó. □

Morales niega acuerdo secreto entre Bolivia y Chile

LA PAZ (Reuters) - El presidente Evo Morales afirmó el lunes, en rechazo a una aseveración de su par peruano Alan García, que no hay acuerdo secreto entre Bolivia y Chile sobre la vieja demanda del país altiplánico de una salida soberana al océano Pacífico.

En un nuevo roce que se sumó a una reciente cadena de desencuentros entre La Paz y Lima, Morales dijo que Bolivia informará oportunamente y con “transparencia” cuando haya eventuales resultados de sus conversaciones con Chile sobre el diferendo marítimo devenido de una guerra del siglo XIX.

“No somos neoliberales para hacer acuerdos reservados”, proclamó el mandatario indígena al referirse, en una conferencia de prensa, a una declaración de García que sugirió la existencia de un pacto “bajo la mesa” entre La Paz y Santiago.

Morales negó actuar con sumisión ante el Gobierno de Chile y opinó que la declaración de García, publicada el domingo por un

diario chileno y ampliamente reproducida por medios de La Paz, pudo estar motivada por problemas internos de Perú.

“El presidente Alan García, el querido hermano compañero chabacano, si dice sumisión (...) es muy grave, no hay ninguna sumisión (de Bolivia a Chile), saben ustedes. Si hay sumisión es de Alan García hacia Estados Unidos”, dijo.

Morales indicó que después de que él asumió el mando en Bolivia y Michelle Bachelet en Chile en el 2006, ambos gobiernos, que no tienen relaciones diplomáticas desde 1978, acordaron resolver una agenda de 13 puntos, entre ellos la demanda boliviana de devolución de un acceso soberano al mar.

“El tema del mar está en manos de las cancillerías (...), quiero que sepan que el Gobierno es transparente, después de muchas negociaciones sobre distintos temas se comunicará algún resultado al pueblo boliviano”, afirmó, señalando que lo que digan antes algunos funcionarios son sólo “intenciones o deseos”. □

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